

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS

ARISE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE; ¿OISTE?;
NEW ENGLAND STATE-AREA
CONFERENCE OF THE NAACP; REV.
TALBERT W. SWAN, II; NORMAN W.
OLIVER, DARLENE ANDERSON,
GUMERSINDO GOMEZ; FRANK BUNTIN;
RAFAEL RODRIQUEZ; and DIANA NURSE,

Plaintiffs,

Civil Action No. 05-30080 MAP

v.

CITY OF SPRINGFIELD and SPRINGFIELD
ELECTION COMMISSION,

Defendants.

TRIAL AFFIDAVIT OF FRANK H. BUNTIN

I, Frank H.Buntin, hereby certify as follows:

1. I have lived in Springfield, MA for the past 45 years and have been active in political and civic affairs. I am President of the Springfield Branch of the NAACP and have been an active member of the organization the entire time I have lived in Springfield. I have a Masters Degree in Education from Boston University and have taught school and have been active in education issues.
2. I ran for Springfield City Council the first year that Bud Williams won. The Springfield newspaper came out with an editorial saying that we were both good candidates and the voters should pick one of us. This was indicative of the attitude of the majority of whites in Springfield that there should be only one minority on the City Counsel at a time.
3. I ran for City Council two times and for School Committee two times. Despite getting a lot of votes from the African American community I was not able to win the white vote and thus was not able to get elected. Under the at-large election system, the minority vote is weakened because all the whites come out and vote for the white candidates, making it much easier for them to win. Even today, when whites are not the majority in Springfield anymore, they are still the voting majority and can still more easily win citywide elections than minority candidates.

4. Generally it has been very difficult for African American and Latino candidates to win citywide elections in Springfield. I remember when Robert McDonald ran for City Council and he won the primary because people thought he was Irish. After he won and the newspaper published his picture and people saw he was African American, he lost the election. Most of the African American candidates who have won have been viewed as the “safe” candidates, those who were perceived as less threatening to the white majority.
5. Many of the African American candidates who lost were more qualified than the white candidates who won. African American candidates with PhD’s and master’s degrees have lost to white candidates with just a high school diploma. For example, Charles Rucks, an African American, was defeated for City Council because white people wouldn’t vote for him despite the fact that he was very qualified and grew up in Springfield. He graduated from Annapolis and was well educated yet couldn’t attract enough of the white vote to win. Jesse Parks, a very qualified African American candidate for School Committee, had a Ph.D and was the head of a Department at Springfield College. He was defeated because he did not get enough white votes, while Fran Coughlin, a less qualified white candidate with just a high school diploma, was elected.
6. When I ran for City Council a white candidate who was also running asked me to take her around my African American neighborhood to introduce her to voters and she would take me around her white neighborhood. She got a good reception in the African American community, but I got a much less cordial reception in her neighborhood. One white voter came up to us and told the white candidate “you’ve got my vote” and pointedly ignored me.
7. There is a long history of school segregation in Springfield. The NAACP went into Federal Court in the 1960’s and then state court in the 1970’s to desegregate the schools. The schools in the minority community were inferior to schools in the white community – inferior buildings, old books and few supplies and unqualified teachers.
8. Today, a large majority of minority children are termed special education students. Yet, most of the students who are placed in out of district private special ed schools, are white.
9. There is also a history of housing discrimination in Springfield. When I first moved to Springfield and was teaching in the schools I went to the housing authority to inquire about housing. I wanted to live in a white neighborhood because the housing was better – but was not permitted to. When I told my principal of my problems finding housing he said “my other colored teaches never had a problem finding a place to live.” I eventually moved into veterans housing and was one of only three Black families living there. A Black doctor was denied housing at Amore Village, a predominantly white single-family area, and he filed a complaint. The newspaper ran an editorial saying that housing discrimination does take place in Springfield. There is now a

Health Center in Mason Square named after the doctor. Recently, a white Housing Authority director was appointed, despite the fact that the majority of people in public housing are Black and Hispanic.

10. Despite the fact that the majority of people in public housing and Section 8 housing in Springfield are African American and Latino, recently three new white members were appointed to the Springfield Housing Authority Board.
11. The city of Springfield has few employees of color and very few if any people who speak Spanish. Even today 80% of the teachers in the school system (which has a minority enrollment of 80%) are white. There was one Black teacher, Lucille Gibbs, who applied to be a principal, and each time she was turned down by the School Committee. Many Blacks have had difficulty being hired as teachers in the Springfield school system.
12. The Springfield police and fire departments are predominantly white despite being under consent decrees requiring them to hire minorities.
13. There is a history of racial animosity and harassment by the Springfield police department against African Americans and Latinos. There is extensive racial profiling with many minorities getting stopped by the police while driving for no reason. When I worked for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, I was stopped by the Springfield police and told I ran a red light, when I didn't. When the white officer saw my federal government sticker, he said "you're one of those big shots." I asked for his badge number and he became enraged. I felt very threatened and felt like I might be shot. Two other police officers came by and I later filed a complaint. A month later I was informed that they determined the police officer had done nothing wrong.
14. Recently a Black school principal who was having a diabetic seizure was assaulted by the police. The white officer involved was found not to be in the wrong despite having three other incidents on his record.
15. African Americans and Latinos in Springfield share many common concerns particularly in the area of education. Both communities are concerned with low test scores, high drop out rates, lack of academic achievement and equity issues. Most recently I worked very closely with Orlando Santiago, a Latino parent who is Vice President of the PTO at Central High School to oppose the new boundary plan for the Springfield schools. We both believe that this plan will further segregate the Springfield schools and will not increase the quality of education for African American and Latino children.
16. I worked on Orlando Santiago's campaign for School Committee. I encouraged people in the African American community to vote for him because I believe he would make a good School Committee member and will seek to improve education for all children.

Signed under penalties of perjury, this 2nd day of January, 2007.



Frank Buntin

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that this document filed through the ECF system will be sent electronically to the registered participants as identified on the Notice of Electronic Filing (NEF) and paper copies will be sent to those indicated as non-registered participants on February 2, 2007.

/s/ Paul E. Nemser